



## SOUTHEAST ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

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January 16, 2004

Local Boundary Commission  
550 West Seventh Avenue, Suite 1770  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-3510  
Fax: (907) 269-4539

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Local Boundary Commission

Dear Sirs,

We are happy to respond to your letter of November 10<sup>th</sup>. We are pleased to have been offered the chance to share with you our thoughts about all forms of school amalgamation plans.

Firstly, we object strenuously to the states continuing effort to correct state budget problems at the expense of our children. The children are already under-financed. We think the state should consider having a 70-30 budgeting rule just as the school systems do, with equally stringent parameters for determining whether or not a particular dollar 'counts' as serving the children.

Secondly, if you choose to amalgamate school districts you should be prepared to spend money to fund the social growth efforts that will be needed to empower the various cultures on Prince of Wales Island to work together in harmony for our children. We remember that the hatreds on the Island were caused and are perpetuated by governments and big businesses; the very agencies which want to solve their fiscal problems by increasing our fiscal *and social* problems.

Thirdly, we are very nervous and suspicious about the too large school that was built in the largest city of the dominant culture on Prince of Wales Island. It was built twice the size that was needed; we wonder why we should play dumb; we do intuit the plan of bussing all high school kids on the island to that half-empty school.

Fourthly, we are strongly supportive of our community schools. Data shows that kids do better academically and socially in smaller schools, *when they are appropriately funded*. Communities are healthier, more viable when they have a local school; more vibrant when they can participate in the governance of their school, more centered when they have a school in which to gather. Having a local school, locally governed, is supportive of local cultural identity. We fear that erasing local cultural identity is an intrinsic objective of school amalgamation on Prince of Wales Island.

Finally, we would like to suggest some important goals for the Local Boundary Commission and the Legislature:

- Be certain that whatever plan you choose to implement actually does institute 'economies of scale' *while appropriately funding our children's education.*
- Be certain that the amalgamation plan you choose doesn't undo our fruitful work to increase the quality of our children's educational programs.
- Be certain that your actions support the social evolution that has begun to occur between the cultures on the Island. This important continuing social evolution will:
  - Enrich the lives of our children,
  - Improve the quality of school programs,
  - Increase harmony among the cultures of the Island,
  - Support the development of local economies.

In closing, we wish to thank you again. We are pleased that you sought our input. We acknowledge and appreciate the individuals serving on the Commission and in the Legislature who are sincere in serving the people *and the children.* We are willing and anxious to help you determine what is truly best for our children.

Sincerely,

The Southeast Island School District